Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fourth periodic report of States parties

Addendum

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* (The Virgin Islands)

* For the initial report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.52 and Amend.1–4; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.155, CEDAW/C/SR.156, CEDAW/C/SR.159 and CEDAW/C/SR.160, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/45/38), paras. 167–213. For the second periodic report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/UK/2 and Amend.1; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.223 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/48/38), paras. 523–589. For the third periodic report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/UK/3 and Add.1and 2.

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Introduction

1. This Fourth Report supplements the Third Report in respect of the Virgin Islands dated January 1998.

2. This Report has been prepared in consultation with the authorities of the Virgin Islands.

3. A contemporary report has also been submitted to the Committee established for the purposes of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this report, the Committee is referred to certain parts of that report which also relate to the position of women.

The Convention

Article 2
Elimination of discrimination

The Women's Desk

4. The Women's Desk continues to function. Its objects include securing compliance with the Convention, but its activities are restricted by the fact that it is a one-woman office and by its limited funding. In particular, it has been unable to initiate any activity in relation to the Hispanic population or as regards prostitution.

Amendment of the Labour Code

5. The Women's Desk continues to urge that the amendment of the Labour Code referred to in the Third Report includes a requirement that employers adopt in-house guidelines on sexual harassment and procedures for dealing with it at the workplace.

Legislation regarding sexual abuse

6. The Criminal Code of 1997 has been amended to provide stronger penalties for sexual offences. Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl between the ages of 13 and 16 years now carries a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment and with a girl under 13 years a maximum penalty of fourteen years imprisonment.

7. The amended Code also provides a new offence of marital rape, which is defined as a sexual assault by a husband against a wife in circumstances where there is a decree nisi of divorce, a decree of judicial separation, a separation agreement or any kind of protection order. The penalty is ten years imprisonment.

Domestic violence and the Family Support Network

8. The results of a survey on domestic violence which was conducted in 1997 by a Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation Consultant were published in 1998. Of the 330 women who participated, slightly more than 28 per cent had experienced some form of physical abuse. Less than half of them had reported the abuse to the police and most remained in the domestic relationship because they were afraid to leave or for financial reasons. Among the recommendations of this report, were further training for police officers, the development of protocols for use within and among the relevant agencies, the strengthening of the Women's Desk with staff and funding, and the provision of funding for the Family Support Network. A consultant has been engaged to develop the protocols which should be ready by the end of February 1999.

9. The Family Support Network continues to provide shelter for women and its services have been used for several women during the past year. At present it operates a second hand clothes shop as a fund raising activity. Again there is a lack of staff and, as noted in the above report, funding, one of the consequences of which is the inability to maintain records. The Women's Desk will hold two seminars in 1999 to strengthen the services provided by the Network. One will be on the basic issues of domestic violence and sexual abuse and will include items on shelter and hotline volunteers. The other is intended to act as an introductory course for people wishing to act as victims' advocates and will provide information on the relevant legislation.

Article 5
Stereotyped roles

10. The Women's Desk has proposed the adoption in labour legislation of an entitlement to paternity leave with the object of recognising the shared role of men and women in parenting.

Article 8
Political and Public Life

11. Women continue to represent the Islands at regional and international conferences. The acting director of tourism was recently chosen by Travel Agent Magazine as one of the 200 most powerful women in the travel business.

Article 11
Employment

Business

12. The Social Security Board has a record of 188 women in the territory who are self employed. The majority, 30, participate in the yacht charter and boat supply sector. Other popular businesses are bars and restaurants (15), stores and boutiques (14), sign and dressmaking (10) and vending and crafts (14). Other self-employed women are engaged in day-care, taxi services, legal services and accountancy.

13. In 1998, the Islands Government initiated a small business development scheme - the Micro Enterprise Development Programme - to encourage entrepreneurship. Thirteen of the twenty participants were women.

Farmers

14. The Women's Desk has conducted a survey on women farmers. There are approximately 80 women farmers in the territory, most of whom concentrate on vegetable and fruit production. The survey showed that most were over the age of 55; they farmed less than one acre and made less than $1,000 per month. The findings of the survey will be published in a report - *Women Farmers of the Virgin Islands* - due to be published by the end of February 1999. This report will also trace women's historical contribution to the agriculture of the territory and contain biographies of several women farmers.

Domestic workers

15. There are more than 1,000 domestic workers in the territory most of whom earn the minimum wage of $3 per hour. Many are migrants and single parents. The Women's Desk will hold a two-day conference in February 1999 for domestic workers which will be attended by an ILO representative and a representative of a domestic workers association in the Region. The conference is intended to highlight the status and condition of domestic servants and it is hoped that it will develop support for a local association.

Article 12
Health care

Health education

16. The Women's Desk participated in the second Health and Wellness Fair sponsored by the Health Department on 30 and 31 August 1998. Information provided at the Desk's booth included material on domestic violence, child abuse, sexually transmitted disease including HIV, rape and cancer.

Pregnancy

17. The Social Development Department and the High School Guidance Section initiated a "Baby Think It Over" programme in 1997. The programme aims to reduce teenage pregnancy and uses a computerised doll to give young people experience of what caring involves. So far, 150 girls and boys have participated in the programme.

18. Community concern is rising about the number of girls who have become pregnant by significantly older men in the past year. Exact figures are not known, but at least two of the girls have been primary school students. The Women's Desk plans to initiate an awareness campaign this year about the relevant sections of the Criminal Code.

HIV/AIDS

19. Since 1985, there are known to have been 47 cases of HIV infection of which 27 were women; the sex of seven is not recorded. Of 16 deaths from AIDS, four were women. It is believed that heterosexual contact continues to account for more than 80 per cent of transmissions. The number of cases may be higher than those noted above as people seek treatment off-island.

Other health issues

20. For further information, the Committee is referred to the following paragraphs of the Initial Report on the Convention of the Rights of the Child dated October 1998:

paragraph 37 (infant mortality);

paragraph 38.2 (antenatal immunisation);

paragraph 42 (services to expectant mothers);

paragraph 45 (day care facilities).

Article 13
Finance

21. The Women's Desk initiated a financial educational campaign in 1998. Three seminars covering the basics of budgeting and investing were held, attended by 43 women and three men. The Desk has also provided information on family saving and budgeting and investing. It is proposed to continue this campaign during the present year with sessions on home ownership, business start-up and budgeting for the single parent, among other topics.

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